

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

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Photo: Sandra Russell

Nancy Johnson, senior policy analyst with our Native Affairs Secretariat, watches as native elder Lillian McGregor explains the meaning of the sweetgrass ceremony to those attending Senior Management Forum. Standing with her is Regional Chief Gordon Peters.

Learning about aboriginal issues

The ministry's senior staff attended a unique gathering of Senior Management Forum on Nov. 30. The theme for the day-long meeting was aboriginal issues. The ministry's Native Affairs Secretariat organized the day, which was held at the head offices of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres in Toronto.

The day opened with a sweetgrass ceremony conducted by native elder Lillian McGregor. Ontario Regional Chief Gordon Peters offered views on the First Nations' perspective of social services. Sylvia Maracle, executive director of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, spoke about the needs of aboriginal people

in urban areas, and the role of the federation.

Grant Wedge, secretary for the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, spoke about Ontario's commitments to First Nations and aboriginal people in the province.

Senior staff were also guests at a lunch which featured aboriginal cuisine.

Senior Management Forum is held four times a year to give the ministry's senior staff an opportunity to discuss specific issues. This forum focussed on aboriginal issues, and how the ministry can organize itself to work more effectively with First Nations and aboriginal communities.

Our kids in our workplaces

Many employees in the Greater Toronto Area took part in Take Our Kids to Work Day Nov. 30. The day, which was arranged with the co-operation of local school boards, was aimed at showing Grade 9 students what it's like to work for a living. Students accompanied a parent or an adult mentor-for-a-day to work and observed the workplace in action. In the Mississauga Area Office, three staff brought their teens to work. In the photo are

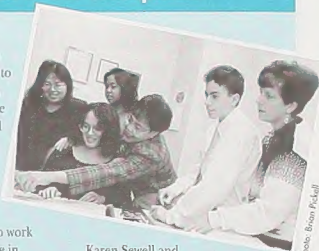


Photo: Brian Pickel

Karen Sewell and Elissa, Janet Casullo with her mother Gloria, and Ali Hamade with his mother Carole.

A northern update

After the ministry reorganization began July 1993, the Program Management Division established a Northern Support Services Branch (NSSB) to carry out specific work. Among other things, the NSSB was asked to examine how best to organize the program management functions of the Division in northern Ontario into the future. This was to be done by Dec. 31, 1994.

Activities and findings to date were outlined in a memo sent on e-mail to all staff in the Thunder Bay, Sudbury and North Bay area offices and to Northern Support Services Branch on Nov. 14, from Assistant Deputy Minister Sue Herbert.

The Northern Bursary Program continues to play a major role in recruiting and retaining professionals in northern Ontario. As of Nov. 14 the Sudbury Area Office assumed lead responsibility for managing and administering the program. A bursary

co-ordinator located at the Sault Ste. Marie District Office will carry out day-to-day administration. A northern advisory committee will continue to provide advice and direction.

- Consultation on the management of the Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) program is almost finished. It's expected that the affected ministries (Health, Education and Training, and Northern Development) will support an approach that provides for a district-based interagency delivery management responsibility and single northern Ontario inter-ministerial program management function. The latter structure will include our area offices. Our plan is to implement a streamlined ISNC management approach as of Jan. 1.
- The review of the northern program management functions and structures is also near completion. An announcement is expected in January.



Photo: Brian Pickel

Meeting the minister

The new Social Assistance Advisory Committee met for the first time on Nov. 22. The 13-member committee, which is composed of people who are social assistance consumers and anti-poverty advocates, provides the minister with advice on proposed changes and improvements to social assistance programs and policies. In the photo are committee chair Linda Lalonde from Ottawa-Carleton, member Jacqueline Thompson from London, and Minister Tony Silipo. The SAAC offices are at 56 Wellesley St., 4th floor, Toronto, and the telephone number is 416-326-6059.

Improved security at Queen's Park

Queen's Park

If you're coming to Queen's Park in the new year, remember to smile for the camera.

Security systems are being beefed up at Queen's Park government offices to combat continuing security problems such as theft of personal and ministry property as well as the personal safety of staff.

Our Facilities Management staff have been working with Management Board Secretariat to create an access card system in Hepburn Block that will

control public access to offices. Visitors will still be able to come to offices, but access will be limited to designated entry points.

If you're driving to Queen's Park, the public parking area off Wellesley St. is still available for the occasional user.

Jan. 6 is the scheduled date for the work to be completed.

For more information, contact Mike Joseph, the senior project manager at Facilities Management, at 416-327-4589.



John French at ITEC.

Photo: Julia Naczynski

Showing our stuff

The annual ITEC conference took place at Queen's Park on Nov. 16. ITEC is the Information Technology Education Council, formerly known as the Systems Education Committee, and is an organization for systems people in the Ontario government. The ITEC conference is an opportunity for systems staff to view new and updated technology that has been gathered in one place.

ITEC is also an opportunity for non-technical staff to see some of the projects that various ministries are working on. MCSS was well-represented in the displays set up in the St. Lawrence Lounge of the Macdonald Block, Queen's Park.

The EASED (Employment Accommodation Service for Employees

with Disabilities) team was there with a lively display of devices that help employees with disabilities perform their jobs. Another exhibit by the Social Assistance Automation Projects (SAAP) included a demonstration of the new caseworker technology application.

Information Systems Branch displayed the Management Services and Resources (MS & R) system, which allows senior management and their staff to view ministry-wide financial and program information via a Windows Graphical User Interface (GUI). This helps management observe trends and to make informed decisions.

In the photo, systems analyst John French demonstrates the MS & R Main Menu.

ISB bits and bytes

Don't know your bits from your bytes? Think "Lotus" is a yoga position, and that "Egghead" refers to intellect and not software?

Fortunately, you have systems officers and a host of other technical people within the ministry to help you keep up to date with the latest in information technology.

More than 100 of our systems staff are up to speed with new and developing technology after attending the annual Information Systems Branch systems meeting Nov. 14 and 15 in downtown Toronto.

The theme for this year's meeting was "New Directions" and the objective was to provide a forum for sharing information among our systems professionals throughout the ministry.

Topics discussed during the meeting included a presentation on

government and ministry directions, the Social Assistance Automation Project and the services provided by Computer and Telecommunication Services (CTS) of Management Board of Cabinet.

Demonstration of new products and services were provided by Egghead Software, Lotus, Microsoft, Powersoft and other displays. ISB ministry technology training and an inventory system developed by our Human Resources Branch were also on display.

A half-dozen concurrent workshop sessions offered details on ministry information technology directions and other topics issues to education the systems community on new directions with the ministry.



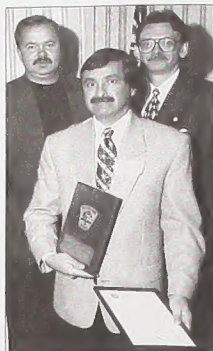
Cops say S.T.O.P. is tops

by Ben Baldassarro

The 11th Annual Crime Prevention Seminar sponsored by the Sault Ste. Marie Police Services took place Oct. 25 in Sault Ste. Marie. With a theme of Youth and Crime, the seminar was attended by a wide cross-section of citizens and police services personnel from across the District of Algoma. David Christopherson, Ontario's Solicitor General, spoke to the delegates on government directions for juvenile justice.

Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Community Awards were presented to Jim Arcangeletti, MCSS Young Offender Services Manager and Zoltan Kovacs, an MCSS probation officer in the Sault District office. The awards recognized their work and dedication to the S.T.O.P. (Stop Taking Our Profits) Program. This program, locally developed, includes a video and workbook designed to educate youths about shoplifting and its consequences. The video and workbook were distributed to all schools in the Algoma District.

In addition, Jim and Zoltan were recognized by the Solicitor General with Crime Prevention Ontario Awards for their efforts in developing the S.T.O.P. Program.



Zoltan Kovacs and Jim Arcangeletti received a crime-prevention award from Solicitor General David Christopherson.

The Sault District Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services is very proud of Jim and Zoltan for their efforts and congratulates them.

Ben Baldassarro is with MCSS Probation Services in Sault Ste. Marie.

Perceptions and experiences about our workplace



One-on-one interviews to identify perceptions, feelings and personal experiences in the workplace were a key component of the Employment Systems Review. These interviews were conducted during the summer by ESR Task Force and Working Group members.

On the basis of guidelines established by Management Board Secretariat, 37 per cent of interview invitations (120) were sent to ensure a wide variety of staff were represented including factors such as classification, geographic representation, gender and bargaining/management status.

Summary results from the interviews show staff's perceptions and experiences of the employment systems are presented here. More detailed results will become part of the ESR's final report. Recruitment and Interviews:

- General dissatisfaction is reported with the job interview process. Concerns center on the types of questions asked and the way responses are scored.
- Responses from managers and line supervisors indicate that designation status is rarely used as a criterion in the hiring process.
- Job orientation was noted as superficial, job training was insufficient and the performance management process leads to nowhere (especially among designated group members).
- Workplace environment:
 - The non-designated group members

find the workplace to be supportive, inclusive and fair in much larger proportions than designated-group members.

- Overall, responses about the way individuals personally felt treated indicate that the workplace is perceived to be fairly good. The following agreement levels were noted:
 - I am encouraged to take courses or workshops (69 per cent).
 - If offered a developmental secondment, I would likely get support from my manager (85 per cent).
 - I am encouraged to take on more complex and responsible assignments (74 per cent).
 - I have as great an opportunity to prove myself as anyone else (75 per cent).
 - Conversely, perceptions about the workplace, as opposed to the treatment of individuals, shows a perception that the workplace has a way to go in order to be seen as equitable and inclusive.
 - Good projects are given to a select group of people in the ministry (58 per cent agreed with this statement).
 - Dissenting views are welcome (51 per cent).
 - Some of my co-workers are made to feel excluded (44 per cent).
 - Staff are selected in a fair manner for tasks (56 per cent).

continued on page 4



Photos: Don Shaw

Most United Way campaigns in ministry workplaces have wound up, and most met their targets. Fund events provided a number of photo opportunities, such as Funny Hat/Tie/Whatever Day in the Hamilton Area Office. In the photos we see (from left) Maureen Sorby, Darlene Gilbert and Dave Vice sporting humorous headgear as part of the office's fundraising activities.

News from the 40th annual meeting of the Probation Officers Association of Ontario, Nov. 6-9, Toronto

Youth justice office promotes a "blended" system

Ontario is the only remaining province that divides services for young offenders between two ministries. This split in jurisdiction and the need to integrate Ontario's young offenders' services is among the issues that led to the creation of the Office for Youth Justice (OYJ), where Marg Galloway is Director of Operations and Program Delivery.

Marg, who is on secondment from MCSS, explained the role and work of the OYJ in a workshop on youth services. The role of the OYJ is to co-ordinate the work of MCSS (which has jurisdiction for Phase I young

offenders aged 12 to 15) and that of the Ministry of the Solicitor General/Correctional Services (Phase II young offenders, 16-17 years old). The goal is to develop a blended youth justice system, said Marg.

A number of problems need to be addressed, Marg said in her presentation. "There are unequal services for young offenders, which leaves the door open to challenges under the Canadian Charter of Rights," she noted. "There is also unnecessary duplication of services, unequal caseloads for probation officers, and the undesirable situation in which Phase II young offenders are held in facilities shared with adult offenders."

The OYJ is developing workplans to establish a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to the youth justice system, said Marg. Some of the issues that will be addressed include a common philosophy and standard practices in the care of young offenders; shared use of young offender facilities and programs; more use of community programs for low-risk offenders; development of joint assessment tools; reducing inappropriate use of pre-trial detention; and distribution of resources based on need, not on age.



Marg Galloway, currently on secondment to the Office of Youth Justice, spoke on issues in youth justice at probation conference.

Using custody when it's appropriate

Using custody appropriately was a recurring theme at a workshop about young offender service delivery issues by Sue Herbert, MCSS Assistant Deputy Minister of Program Management, and Glenn Semple, acting Manager of Young Offender Services with Correctional Services from North Bay.

The MCSS service philosophy is to support and assist youth to become

law-abiding citizens, Sue said. We need to reduce the reliance on residential care for young offenders because a number of youths can be appropriately and safely

served in less intrusive and less costly ways. The use of custody is mostly determined by the police and the Crown (judges and Crown attorneys), she noted.

Glenn agreed, noting that a large proportion of Phase II (16- and 17-year-old) young offenders receive custody dispositions, even though almost one-quarter of those young offenders

had no prior history of supervision.

Currently, there are limitations on MCSS and the Ministry of Solicitor General and Correctional Services' ability to access each other's programs, and we have no formal way of tracking young offenders from Phase I (MCSS jurisdiction) to Phase II (Correctional Services), noted Glenn.

Probation officers are service providers in their own right and need



Sue Herbert and Glenn Semple spoke on issues in service delivery to young offenders at the probation officers' conference.

to be actively involved in communities to identify service needs and appropriate programs, Sue said.

One of the probation officers at the workshop pointed out that "the alternative to custody is probation, and there are not enough of us probation officers now."

MCSS has 219 probation officers and 32 probation supervisors.

Just how important is plain language to your work?

Have you thought about why plain language is important?

A clearly-written document will: reduce errors; save your readers from having to "interpret" your meaning; save you time answering questions; and save time in processing.

That's why plain language is part of everybody's job.

The way you structure your document should make it easy for the reader to understand your message; reading it **once** should be enough.

Think about the way you structure paragraphs and sentences:

- Limit each paragraph to one idea.
- Don't overload sentences

PLAIN LANGUAGE PLEASE

(make it two sentences if that makes the meaning clear).

- Use "active" sentences (not "You are encouraged" but "I encourage you").
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- Keep sentences simple.
- Link your ideas.
- Avoid ambiguity in your sentences (make sure the sentence has one clear meaning).
- Emphasize the positive.
- Avoid double negatives.

Helping families in French

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) held its first-ever day of consultation on French language services (FLS) with representatives from its member agencies across Ontario on Nov. 22. Discussion centred on how to best integrate the delivery of French-language services in the agencies.

Réjean Nadeau, the ministry's provincial FLS co-ordinator, presented a talk about obligations and responsibilities under the French Language Services Act. Participants viewed

materials, such as translated forms, an English-French child abuse glossary from the Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse, and a directory of French-speaking personnel for CASs across Ontario.

Provincial groups and corporate ministry offices interested in setting up a similar consultation session may contact Réjean Nadeau at 416-327-8886, or contact your area office program supervisor or FLS co-ordinator. For more information on the OACAS's reference materials, please contact Cécile Thompson, Coordinator, FLS for the OACAS, at 416-366-8115.



Nicole Lafrenière-Davis, director of Children's Services Branch, chats with Jacques Martel, the executive director of the Children's Aid Society of the Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin.

People and Places

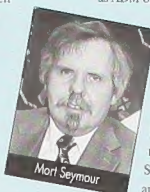
Mort Seymour has been selected to become Co-ordinator, Organizational Support and Development in Management Support Branch. The branch is combining the positions formerly held by Jean Macdonald and Lynn Cassidy, who are both on secondments, into a single position.

Darlene MacDonald-Forsyth will be Co-ordinator for Community Services in Management Support Branch until May 26. She has been Senior Policy Analyst with the Social Assistance Programs Branch.

Lynn Macdonald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services, left on Nov. 28 to work temporarily at Cabinet Office, where she is leading a project team on youth unemployment. The acting ADM is **Barbara Saunders**. **Sheila Masters**, the Barrie Area Office Manager, is taking over Barb's area manager duties in Toronto Area Office during this period. **Joe Fecht** is Acting Manager for Barrie.

Andrea Walker, who has been acting as ADM of Strategic Directions, is also leaving the ministry temporarily. She has taken the position of Acting Assistant Deputy Attorney General - Civil Law. When she returns, Andrea will resume her position as Director of Legal Services. **Ciondha McMullin** will act

as ADM of Strategic Directions until a competition is held.



Mort Seymour

Kathryn Hynes becomes Executive Assistant to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Program Management, Sue Herbert, for five months beginning Jan. 3. She is currently a policy analyst with Management Support Branch's child

care team.

Stephen Newroth, who was administrator of Muskoka Regional Centre when it closed last year, is now Executive Director of Alberta's provincial mental health board.

Please note that the Social Assistance

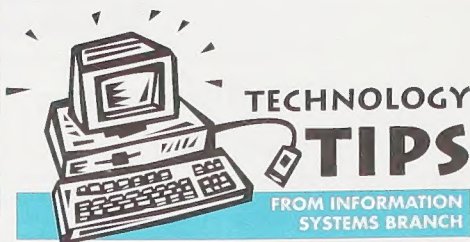
Automation Projects has obtained its own fax; the number is 416-326-8098.



Barbara Saunders

In Communications and Marketing Branch, you may reach the Director's office as well as Briefings and Issues at 416-325-5200; the other fax numbers can still be used.

The Waterloo Area Office has a new fax line especially for Income Maintenance, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Probation Services; the fax number is 519-886-8997. You should continue to use the fax number 519-885-1580 to reach the Area Manager, Community Program Unit and Finance and Administration. These faxes are on separate floors, so staff would appreciate your help in using the appropriate one.



Don't be cut off by Call Waiting

It would be nice if we could complete all assignments during our regular work hours but, as time marches on, so does the need for some of us to work from home occasionally.

Thanks to technology advances, we can now access the VAX on a computer at home, using modems and regular telephone lines. But if you have Bell's "Call Waiting" service on your phone line, you will likely want to turn off this feature temporarily while working at home, because "Call Waiting" will sever your connection to your computer account if a phone call comes in.

First of all, make sure you can turn off this feature. To find out, call Bell Canada's Customer Service and ask to check if the phone number you will be using (for the modem) has the capability of temporarily "turning off" Call Waiting. Bell can quickly check and let you know. If you do have it—try the following steps and save yourself some headaches:

HOW TO TEMPORARILY TURN OFF CALL WAITING:

On Touchtone phones -

- To manually turn off the feature:
- Pick up receiver and wait for dial tone.
- Enter 70 and press #.

- Wait for a second dial tone.
 - Enter the desired phone number (to your account).
- When using a modem to access the VAX:
- Load your communications software (e.g. Sethost, Xtalk).
 - When prompted type the following command:
 - ATDT *70,2212079
 - Press <Return> and follow the prompts.

On Dial or Pulse phones -

To manually turn off the feature:

- Follow the same procedures as above EXCEPT use:
 - 70 instead of 70#
- When using a modem to access the VAX:
- Follow the same procedures as above EXCEPT use:
 - ATDP 70,2212079

The Call Waiting feature is turned off for the duration of the call only. Call Waiting will turn back on when you hang up. Parties calling you while you have temporarily turned off your Call Waiting will get a busy signal.

Please note that these procedures are continually being reviewed. If you have any suggestions or concerns, please the ISB Hotline at 416-730-6550.

LIBRARY CORNER

Behind the scenes at MCSS Library and Career Resources (LCR)

by Dolly Lyn, LCR

Do you need to be kept current on the latest research or literature on a specific topic? An easy way, of course, is by checking Library and Career Resources (LCR) and the listings of new resources sent out over the DEC system.

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes in your ministry library when you receive "New Books" (not to be confused with "Journal Articles," the other library listing) on e-mail? An immense amount of activity goes on before new resources become available.

First, the library staff try to anticipate your information needs by scanning newspapers and magazines, reviewing publishers' catalogues and checking book reviews. Then, following a library "collection guideline," we select and order materials in various formats — books, journals, audio-visual, or diskettes — which address

MCSS programs and initiatives.

After the selected material is received by LCR, it is ready for cataloguing. A great deal of thought goes into classifying material to allow you to find it easily in the library's catalogue database; otherwise, what is on the shelves would be a meaningless jumble.

Once a month, the library identifies new books/videos to you via an electronic "New Books" listing. You can request any item (except reference materials) by e-mailing the LIBRARY account. The book/video will be sent; or we will notify you by e-mail if it is already on loan. In that case, we will reserve it and send it on to you when it is returned. If you work in a facility, please place your requests through our on-site library.

The LCR — it's quick, it's easy and it's free. Call us at 416-326-6442, or visit us at 880 Bay St., 4th floor, Toronto.

ESR: perceptions

continued from page 2

- Work assignments are awarded on the basis of competence (51 per cent).

A majority of designated group members reported feeling that discrimination is an important problem, and that employment equity has helped. Meanwhile, a majority of the non-

designated group reported feeling that discrimination is not serious in the workplace and that their non-designated status has actually hurt them.

You are encouraged to send your comments about this article and the ESR project via e-mail to ESR_PROJECT, by fax to 416-327-0568 or call (416) 327-4935 to reach project co-ordinator Hunter Saggat.

dialogue

Dialogue is published 10 times a year by the Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to provide an information forum for all employees of the ministry. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect ministry or government policy.

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